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# POTRERO HILL

## NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT STUDY



June 1955

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CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

100 LARKIN STREET • CIVIC CENTER • SAN FRANCISCO 2, CALIFORNIA

December 13, 1955

Dear Friend:

As a person interested in civic improvement you are being sent a copy of a recently published report by the San Francisco Department of City Planning.

This study reviews existing housing and neighborhood conditions and is an attempt to make general classifications according to housing quality. It was done as part of the basic studies for San Francisco's urban renewal program.

Urban renewal is a broad approach to the problem of urban blight and slums. In addition to redevelopment or clearance projects, it involves voluntary improvement, co-ordinated code enforcement and public improvements.

The Housing and Home Finance Agency has notified the city that its "workable program" for urban renewal has been approved, effective November 1, 1955. This approval means that San Francisco now is eligible for federal financial assistance for urban renewal projects (in addition to redevelopment projects already undertaken under the Housing Act of 1949) and for certain kind of mortgage insurance.

As the planning phases of the Diamond Heights and Western Addition projects are completed and property acquisition will begin sometime next year, the next step in San Francisco's urban renewal program is the selection of areas and planning for the next projects. This report will assist in selection of urban renewal areas by indicating the comparative quality of living conditions in various areas of the city.

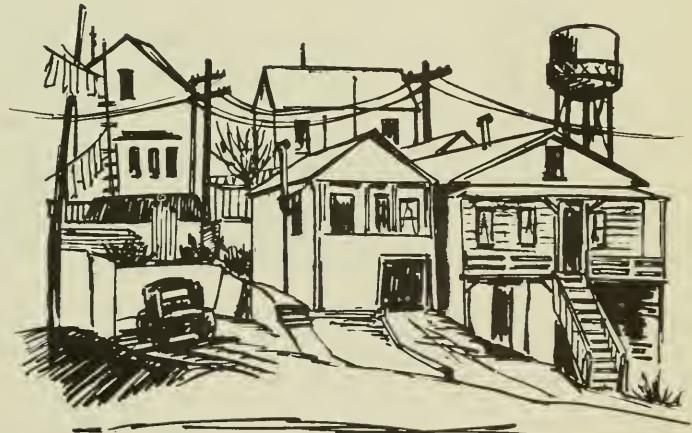
Yours very truly,

Paul Oppermann  
Director of Planning



# POTRERO HILL NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION



JUNE 1955

S A N   F R A N C I S C O   D E P A R T M E N T   O F   C I T Y   P L A N N I N G  
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CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING  
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ELMER E. ROBINSON  
MAYOR

PAUL OPPERMANN  
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING  
JOSEPH MIGNOLA, JR.  
SECRETARY



June 1, 1955

Mr. Ernest E. Williams, President  
City Planning Commission  
100 Larkin Street  
San Francisco 2, California

Dear Mr. Williams:

The attached report is presented to the City Planning Commission as a staff study of urban renewal planning on a neighborhood basis. For various reasons, the Potrero Hill neighborhood was selected as a trial area to make preliminary studies of land use, housing characteristics, streets, topography, public facilities and other existing conditions. A neighborhood plan was prepared indicating possibilities for a neighborhood conservation program by improvement of private properties and public facilities.

This report was prepared as an exploratory study to determine the extent of planning needed for an urban renewal project. Such neighborhood studies and analyses are required under the 1954 Housing Act to qualify San Francisco for Federal assistance. "Potrero Hill Neighborhood Improvement" is an example of the kind of studies which must be made for other neighborhoods.

This completed staff study is presented for the information of the Commission. It is not intended that the City Planning Commission initiate action at this time to designate the Potrero Hill area as an urban renewal area.

After such time as city-wide housing and neighborhood studies are completed, priorities established on a neighborhood basis, a workable program approved and community support secured, urban renewal projects can be selected.

Yours truly,

*Paul Oppermann*  
Paul Oppermann  
Director of Planning

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RECORDED 20 JUN 1955

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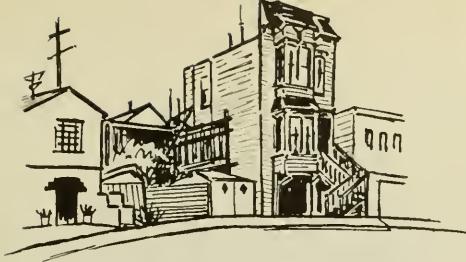
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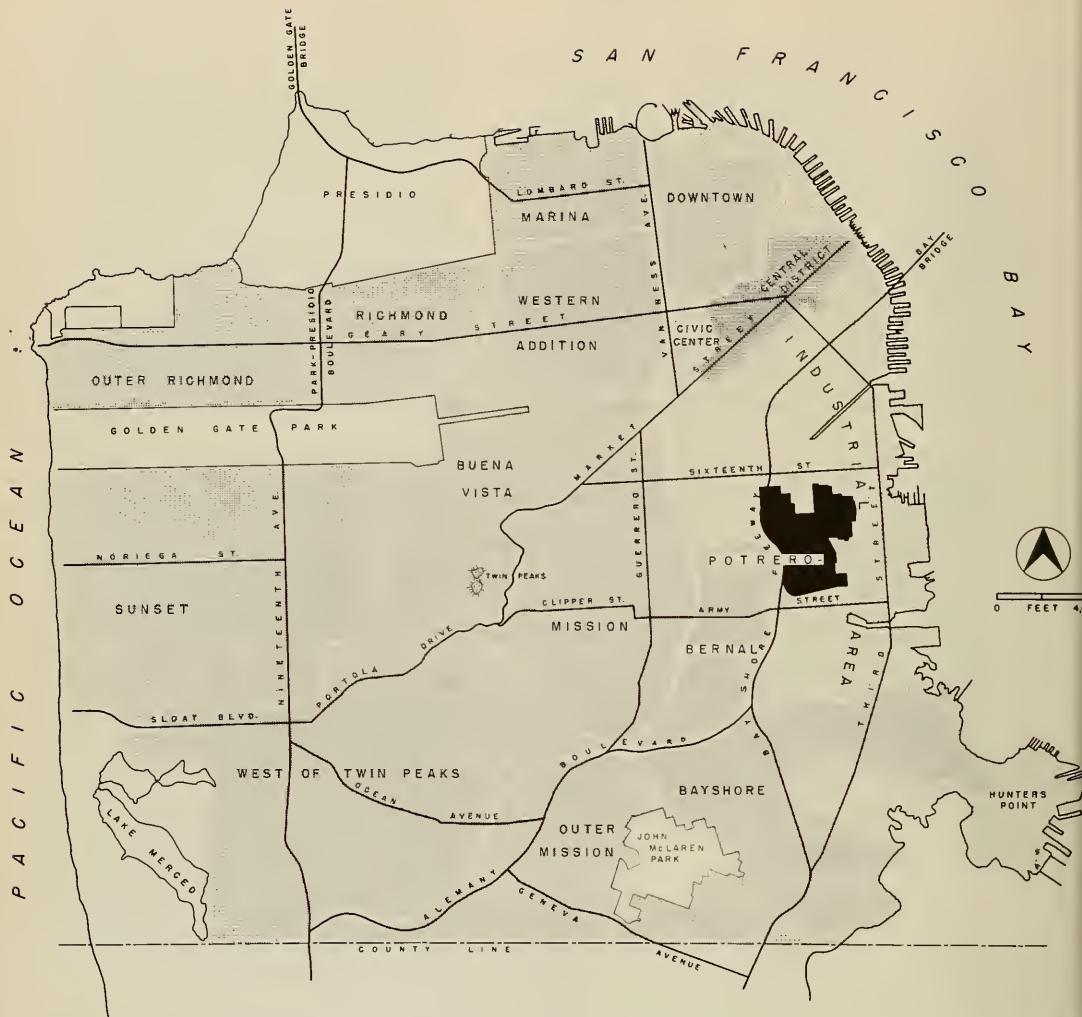


## INTRODUCTION

The urban renewal program contained in the Housing Act of 1954 is expected to play an important part in the improvement of many San Francisco neighborhoods. The Department of City Planning has made a special study of the Potrero Hill area as an exploratory step taken to determine the types of planning studies necessary in each neighborhood before the program could be put into action. While there are many neighborhoods which could have been chosen as a starting point, Potrero Hill seems to offer an opportunity to employ many different, related techniques and to achieve a result which would stimulate action in other parts of the city.

Potrero Hill rises 300 feet above the Bay and is located south of the downtown area and east of the Mission business district. (See Plate 1.) The hill is roughly "Y" shaped with the stem pointing south and the crest located where the arms meet. From almost any point above the 50 foot level, there are spectacular views of the Bay, downtown, or the Mission Valley and Twin Peaks. The climate, although often windy, is one of the sunniest in the city. These factors, plus convenience to employment centers, downtown, the East Bay and the Peninsula, make Potrero Hill potentially one of San Francisco's most desirable residential locations.

Because Potrero Hill is somewhat isolated there can be no confusion of its identity with other sections of the city on the part of residents in the area. It can be clearly known that one is "living on Potrero Hill." Thus the ingredients of local identity, allegiance and pride in one's home neighborhood can exist. They are very important in any cooperative undertaking. This is somewhat difficult to achieve in many other areas of a large city like San Francisco where "cohesive" neighborhoods are often hard to define.



## POTRERO HILL URBAN RENEWAL STUDY LOCATION MAP

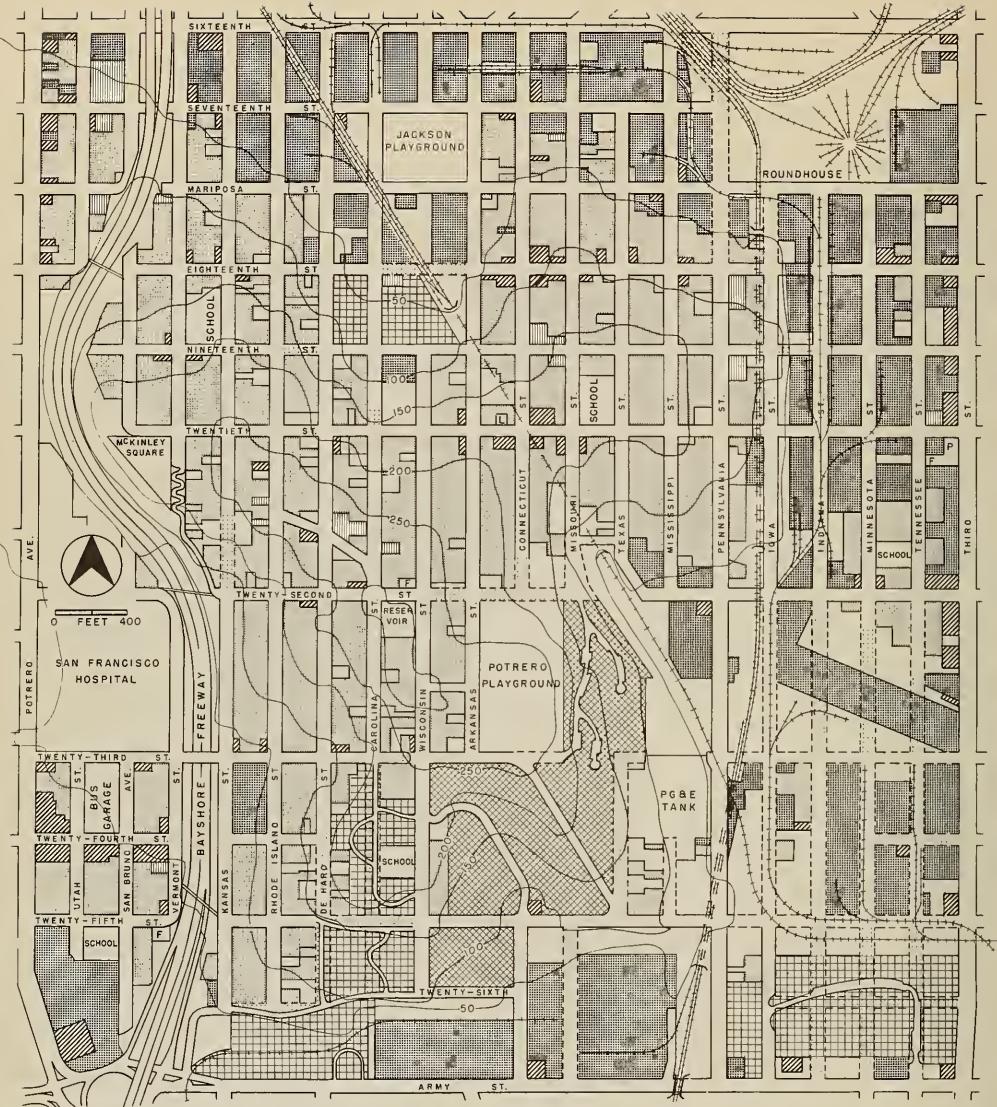
- POTRERO HILL STUDY AREA (PART OF POTRERO-BERNAL COMMUNITY)
- RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES
- WORKING AREA
- CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Potrero residential neighborhood has many faults as well as advantages. It is surrounded on three sides by industry and, since 1952, on the fourth side by the Bayshore Freeway. In some parts of the area housing and industry are intermingled. The housing is of mixed quality, varying from good to bad in almost every block. Much of the hill is barren of planting. There are unimproved streets. Transit service is indirect. Many improvements, both private and public, are needed.

Only a small part of the area is actually "blighted" under the definitions of the California Community Redevelopment Law. Rather the neighborhood is an older or "middle aged" area showing evidences of long, slow decline and deterioration which can be arrested through a coordinated program of private and public improvements. Therefore the area seems very well suited for an urban renewal program which would include primarily neighborhood conservation measures, rehabilitation of many private properties and a limited amount of redevelopment in certain "pockets" of neglected dwellings within the total neighborhood.

In this study of Potrero Hill the land use plan for the area, a refinement of the city-wide master plan, has been brought up to date and made more complete. The plan developed in this study is based on the master plan. It is, of course, more specific and detailed than such a plan. It is called here a "Neighborhood Development Plan."

Urban renewal measures appropriate to different parts of the study area were considered. A possible pilot project area was selected and a suggested plan for improvement prepared. The urban renewal measures and the suggested demonstration project are not recommended for immediate action, but rather are presented at this time as examples of types of action in an urban renewal program.



## POTRERO HILL URBAN RENEWAL STUDY

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

(GENERALIZED LAND USE)

- [Symbol: Residential Private] RESIDENTIAL, PRIVATE
- [Symbol: Permanent Public Housing] PERMANENT PUBLIC HOUSING
- [Symbol: Temporary Public Housing] TEMPORARY PUBLIC HOUSING
- [Symbol: Commercial] COMMERCIAL
- [Symbol: Industrial] INDUSTRIAL

[Symbol: Vacant] VACANT

- [Symbol: Impassable Street] IMPASSABLE STREET
- [Symbol: Firehouse] F FIREHOUSE
- [Symbol: Police Station] P POLICE STATION
- [Symbol: Library] L LIBRARY
- [Symbol: Private Institution] PRIVATE INSTITUTION



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The physical characteristics of the Potrero Hill Study area and population and housing data (see Appendix) are covered in this report. Attitudes of residents toward their neighborhood and its improvement were studied for the Department of City Planning by Dianne Catlin and Benjamin S. Neufeld, Interns in Public Affairs of the Coro Foundation, San Francisco. Their report, "A Study of Potrero Hill Neighborhood Attitudes and Organization in Relation to Urban Renewal", is based on 50 interviews with neighborhood leaders at the time this report was in preparation.

Surveys made for this study cover the 170 block area between 16th and Army Streets and Potrero Avenue and Third Street. This includes a strip several blocks wide on all sides of the Potrero Hill neighborhood. Existing conditions have been shown on Plate 2.

1. Land Use. Sources: 1948 Land Use Survey, 1954 Sanborn Atlas, 1954 Field Survey. (Map on file at the San Francisco Department of City Planning).

The flat area surrounding the hill is in industrial use except as follows: two small pockets of old housing on the east, one temporary war housing project on the south, and the 24th Street business and residential area and San Francisco Hospital across the freeway on the west. The hill is devoted mostly to one and two-family residences with a number of small apartment houses on the northeastern spur known as "Scotch Hill". Other important land uses on the hill are two temporary and two permanent low rent public housing projects, three elementary schools, McKinley Square Park (2.38 acres), Potrero Playfield (9.55 acres), two small shopping centers, and a scattering of corner grocery stores.

2. Population Characteristics. Source: 1950 Census, Tract L-1. (This tract is bounded by 17th Street, 25th Street, Vermont Street and the Bay and contains nearly all the dwellings in the study area).

The 1950 population was 11,450 of which about 21 percent were foreign born white and 5 per cent Negro. Predominant among the foreign born were Italians (29 per cent) and Russians (18 per cent).

Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and laborers accounted for two-thirds of the employed males. Thirty per cent of the women over 14 were employed or three per cent more than the city-wide average.

Twenty-one per cent of the persons over 25 years old had completed 4 years of high school as against 29 per cent for the city as a whole. Another 8 per cent had attended one or more years of college compared with the city total of 19 per cent. The median annual income was \$3,119, or \$110 higher than the median for the city.

With few exceptions the streets in the area follow a gridiron pattern. Blocks are 400 or 866 feet long and 200 feet deep. Most of the street mileage on the hill has a grade of more than 10 per cent and major access streets all have a grade of 15 per cent or more at some point. Seven blocks of paved streets have grades between 24 and 30 per cent. Nine blocks on the hill are unimproved, in most cases because grades exceed 30 per cent. In the flat southeastern corner of the survey area most of the streets are unpaved but passable.



A street pattern unsuited for the hill has resulted in steep streets, many unpaved and impassable. This has been an important factor in retarding full development of the area.

Major entrances to the area from the north are Kansas, Arkansas, Connecticut and Missouri Streets, each of approximately equal importance. Mariposa, 18th and 20th Streets are the eastern gateways. Connecticut and 26th Streets on the south and 23rd and 17th Streets on the west are the other important entrances. North-south streets have 80 foot right of ways with 50 foot paving in most cases and east-west streets are 66 feet wide with 40 foot paving. Most surfaces are in good condition although some streets have brick center strips which are slippery during wet weather.

4. Housing Characteristics. Source: 1950 Census of Housing. The table below permits comparison of Potrero Hill housing with housing in the city as a whole:

H O U S I N G C H A R A C T E R I S T I C S

Median rent	\$40.27	\$33.73
Median value of 1 dwelling unit structures	\$11,930	\$7,319

5. Condition of Housing. Source: 1950 Census of Housing. (Map on file at the San Francisco Department of City Planning).

Percentages of dwelling units which were without running water or dilapidated have been mapped by block. The largest area with dwellings in this condition is between 20th and 22nd Streets and Vermont and DeHaro Streets where from 20 to 35 per cent of the dwellings were so reported in the Census. In the small residential area near 23rd and Indiana Streets over half of the dwelling units were without running water or dilapidated.

6. Appearance of Structures. Source: 1954 field survey. (Map on file at the San Francisco Department of City Planning).

The effect of each structure on the character of the neighborhood was judged by its appearance from the street. All buildings have been placed in one of the following categories:

Stable. This group includes about 70 per cent of the properties.  
Rehabilitation indicated. These structures have a harmful effect on the neighborhood.

Typical defects are: paint badly needed; broken stairs, fences, doors, windows; accessory buildings which should be demolished; debris in yard.

Demolition indicated. Condition of major structure on property does not appear to justify rehabilitation.

Demolition required. This designation is used for temporary war housing which is scheduled for removal within two or three years.

It should be emphasized that this study did not include inspection of interiors or rear yards. No data on compliance with health, fire, housing, or building codes was gathered.

Twenty-one per cent of the persons over 25 years old had completed 4 years of high school as against 29 per cent for the city as a whole. Another 8 per cent had attended one or more years of college compared with the city total of 19 per cent. The median annual income was \$3,119, or \$110 higher than the median for the city.

Please insert the following below the first paragraph on page 10:

Unrelated individuals comprised only 6.5 per cent of the population compared with 20 per cent in the city, indicating that Potrero Hill is a family neighborhood. The average population per household was 3.3 versus 2.7 for the city. Residential stability was slightly higher than the city average: 84 per cent of the population had lived in the same house for one year or more as compared with 81 per cent for the city.

3. Circulation and Street Grades. Source: Department of Public Works Bureau of Engineering. (Map on file at the San Francisco Department of City Planning).



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4. Housing Characteristics. Source: 1950 Census of Housing. The table below permits comparison of Potrero Hill housing with housing in the city as a whole:

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

	San Francisco Total	Potrero Hill (Census Tract L-1)
Type of structure:		
1 and 2 dwelling units	51.3%	68.3%
3 and 4 dwelling units	11.6%	12.7%
5 or more dwelling units	37.1%	19.0%
Owner occupied dwelling units	35.6%	38.8%
Dwelling units without running water or dilapidated	2.6%	9.0%
Dwelling units built in 1919 or earlier	50.0%	59.4%
Median rent	\$40.27	\$33.73
Median value of 1 dwelling unit structures	\$11,930	\$7,319

5. Condition of Housing. Source: 1950 Census of Housing. (Map on file at the San Francisco Department of City Planning).

Percentages of dwelling units which were without running water or dilapidated have been mapped by block. The largest area with dwellings in this condition is between 20th and 22nd Streets and Vermont and DeHaro Streets where from 20 to 35 per cent of the dwellings were so reported in the Census. In the small residential area near 23rd and Indiana Streets over half of the dwelling units were without running water or dilapidated.

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The effect of each structure on the character of the neighborhood was judged by its appearance from the street. All buildings have been placed in one of the following categories:

Stable. This group includes about 70 per cent of the properties.  
Rehabilitation indicated. These structures have a harmful effect on the neighborhood.

Typical defects are: paint badly needed; broken stairs, fences, doors, windows; accessory buildings which should be demolished; debris in yard.

Demolition indicated. Condition of major structure on property does not appear to justify rehabilitation.

Demolition required. This designation is used for temporary war housing which is scheduled for removal within two or three years.

It should be emphasized that this study did not include inspection of interiors or rear yards. No data on compliance with health, fire, housing, or building codes was gathered.

7. Age of Structures. Sources: 1919 Sanborn Atlas, 1948 Land Use Survey and 1954 Land Use Survey. (Map on file at the San Francisco Department of City Planning).

A map has been prepared showing structures erected before 1919, 1919-1948, and after 1948. Old structures moved to new sites are classified as new. This accounts for a considerable number of the "new" structures in the southwest part of the area where many houses were moved from the freeway route to nearby vacant lots. The majority of the privately-owned dwelling units on the hill were erected prior to 1919. Many were hurriedly built in the period following the 1906 earthquake and fire and were of substandard design. Old and new housing is distributed fairly evenly over the hill, although the several post-war developments of six or more houses are all on the lower northern and eastern slopes.

8. Owner Occupancy. Source: 1950 Census of Housing. (Map on file at the San Francisco Department of City Planning).

It is believed that the initial renewal project would be most successful in an area with a high percentage of owner occupied dwellings. Census data shows the number of dwelling units which are owner occupied rather than the number of residential structures which are owner occupied. Thus the percentage is lower in multiple-family housing areas even though the owners live on the premises. Block averages are scattered but the highest owner occupancy area is between 20th and 22nd Streets and DeHaro Street and Pennsylvania Avenue where the range is from 48 to 70 per cent. Only 10 blocks in the study area average less than 25 per cent owner occupancy and none of these are on the hill.

9. Shopping Facilities. There are two small shopping centers and 17 corner grocery stores in the neighborhood. The older center on 18th Street between Connecticut and Texas Streets has 24 stores, including a theater, appliance store, drygoods store and several bars. The 17-store group on 20th Street between Arkansas and Missouri Streets includes a variety store, TV store, pet shop, and the new public library. There is no food store larger than a neighborhood grocery on the hill and it is believed that a fairly large percentage of food purchases are made at the Safeway supermarket at 24th Street and Potrero Avenue or elsewhere outside the neighborhood. Major shopping facilities are on 24th Street west of Potrero Avenue and on Mission Street.

#### 10. Public Facilities and Services.

##### Schools:

###### Elementary

Patrick Henry	...	19th and Kansas Street. Recently enlarged 1954 Fall Enrollment - 481.
Daniel Webster	...	20th and Missouri Streets. Included 7th and 8th grades until Fall 1954 when increased enrollment required use of space for lower grades. 1954 Fall enrollment - 587.
New Starr-King	...	Wisconsin and Carolina Streets. Opening Feb- ruary 1955.
Old Starr-King	...	25th and Utah Streets. Cut off from service area by freeway. May remain in use. 1954 Fall enrollment 566.

Irving M. Scott . . . 22nd and Tennessee Streets. Serves small residential area surrounded by industry. 1954 Fall enrollment 310.

Total public elementary school enrollment, Fall 1954 was 1950 students. St. Teresa's parochial school at 19th and Pennsylvania Avenue has 367 students through the 8th grade.

Junior High

Horace Mann . . . 23rd and Valencia Streets.  
Everett . . . Church and 16th Streets.

Both of these schools are more than the desirable maximum distance (1 mile) from most of the neighborhood. A new junior high school scheduled for early construction at Silver Avenue and Thomas Street to the south will be no more convenient. The Board of Education has no plans for a junior high school in the Potrero-Bernal community. Mission High School at 18th and Dolores Streets serves the Potrero-Bernal community.

Parks and playgrounds:

Jackson Playground . . . 4.40 acres at 17th and Arkansas Streets. Located at the edge of the working area. Softball field is used by industrial and community teams.

Potrero Playfield . . . 9.55 acres at 23rd and Arkansas Streets. Includes playlot, tennis and basketball courts, meeting rooms and stage.

McKinley Square Park . . 2.37 acres at 20th and Vermont Streets. Ornamental park with a fine view.

Transit:

Present service to the top of the hill is provided by the No. 53 bus from 16th and Bryant Streets. The requirement that street grades be less than 18 per cent is partly responsible for its circuitous route. The No. 22 trolley bus runs from Third Street along 18th, 17th and 16th Streets to Fillmore Street. The No. 35 motor bus connects the southern slope of the hill with 24th Street and the Mission Street shopping area. The No. 47 trolley bus runs on Potrero Avenue to Van Ness Avenue. Service to the downtown area is now indirect for most Potrero Hill residents and requires at least one transfer and usually two transfers.

Fire, police, water, garbage, health and welfare services:

No formal study of these services was made. The report of the Coro Foundation interns (see Appendix) indicates neighborhood attitudes regarding adequacy of some of these city services.

Street and sidewalk cleaning:

The problem of street cleaning is intensified by the large number of vacant lots and unimproved streets which collect rubbish and deposit loose material from steep banks on sidewalks.



## URBAN RENEWAL MEASURES

The information gathered on existing conditions was used to determine the quality of the various sections of the study area.

In this way the degree of private and public improvement necessary to achieve the desired total neighborhood improvement can be ascertained. However, no interior inspection of structures was possible at this time and individual building conditions were not classified. Such detailed surveys will be necessary as part of any individual improvement program.

The study area examined contains some variety of housing conditions requiring differing remedial measures. Certain residential pockets of bad housing exist in the industrial area to the east of Potrero Hill which clearly require demolition through application of redevelopment powers. The dwellings are mislocated in conjunction with industry and much of the housing is substandard. The land is better suited and needed for industrial development.

On Potrero Hill proper there are a number of other structures which may require demolition either by reason of violation of health, building or fire codes or by exercise of eminent domain powers under the state community redevelopment law.

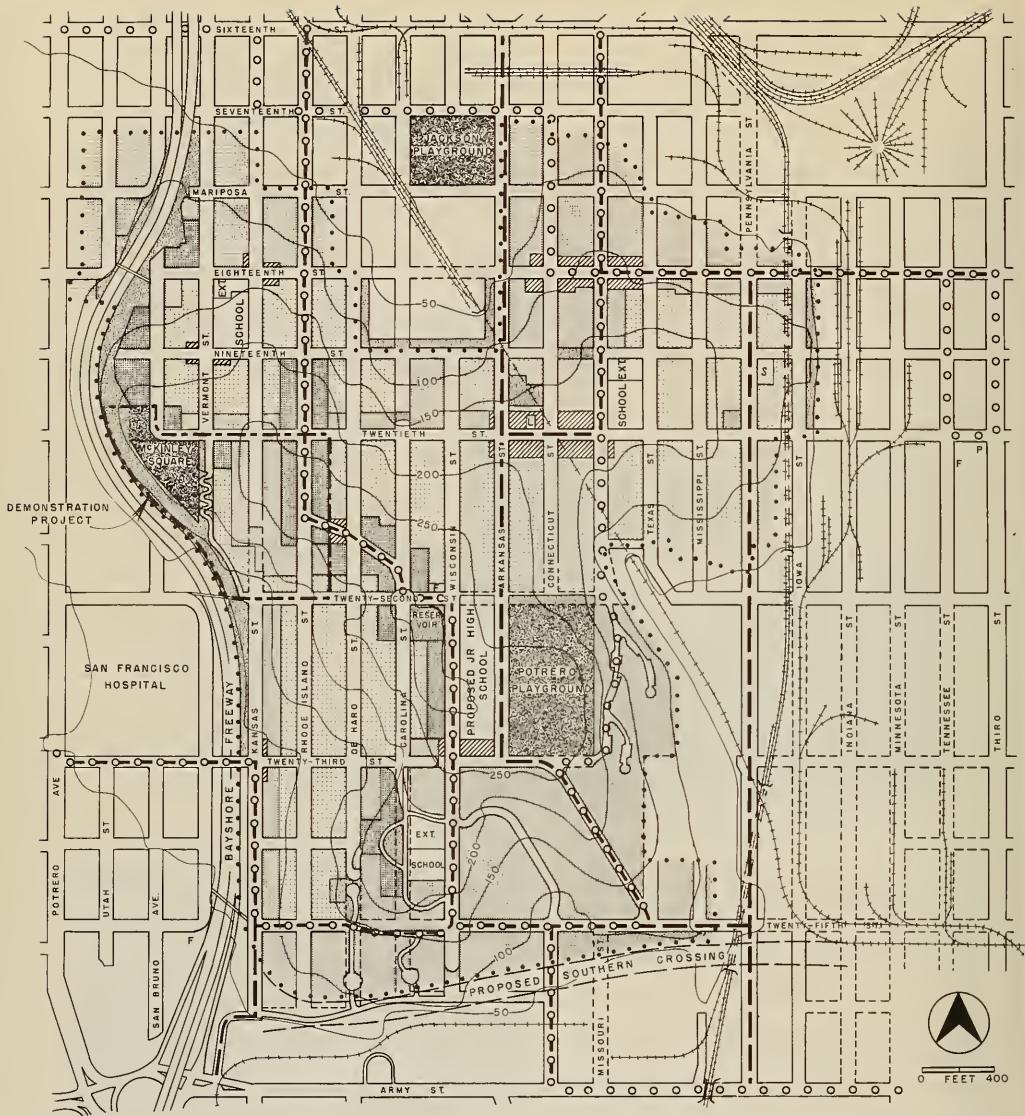
Temporary war housing projects may qualify automatically under the state redevelopment law and thus may be removed and the property sold and used for other purposes. However, the disposition of these projects is being scheduled by the federal and local public housing authorities.

The rest of the study area is of varying degrees of quality which makes precise classification difficult. Most blocks contain one or two structures which should be demolished, a number which will require extensive rehabilitation and many needing better maintenance or some improvement. Enforcement of

health, housing, building, fire, police and zoning laws is needed throughout most of the study area. Considerable enforced clean-up will be required.

In addition to stimulation of voluntary cooperation and enforcement of codes to accomplish improvement of private properties, certain public improvements are necessary. Only by means of both private and public action can the whole neighborhood be "up-graded" and values maintained. The general types of both private and public improvement are discussed in the next two sections.





# POTRERO HILL URBAN RENEWAL STUDY NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

-  NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPPING
-  LOW MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS
-  EXISTING
- • • NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARY

○ ○ ○ BUS ROUTE  
— — SECONDARY THOROUGHFARE (PROPOSED)  
— — — BUS ON SECONDARY THOROUGHFARE  
— — — — DEMONSTRATION PROJECT BOUNDARY  
F FIREHOUSE  
P POLICE STATION  
L LIBRARY



## NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

An urban renewal program for a designated area must have certain goals or objectives toward which a variety of both public and private improvements are directed. These goals or objectives are best represented in a neighborhood development plan for the area. This plan is a fairly detailed set of proposals for the physical development of the neighborhood based on the city-wide land use plan and the community land use plan. Although it is a long-range plan, the development plan also portrays desirable short-range public and private improvements. The plan consists of four sections shown on Plate 3 as follows:

1. Land Use	3. Public Facilities
2. Circulation	4. Neighborhood Appearance

1. Land Use.

(a) Living Area. All parts of the hill which are topographically separated from the present working area are to remain or to be developed as living area. The most important changes proposed designate the Carolina War Housing site as part of the working area and the present site of the Dutch Boy Paint Factory at 23rd and Kansas Street as ultimately part of the living area.

Three residential densities are shown on the plan:

	<u>Persons/acre</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Total Persons</u>
Low Medium	70	68.7	4,800
Medium	130	50.6	6,600
High Medium	160	12.3	1,950
			13,350
Permanent Public Housing			2,050
			15,400
		Holding Capacity	

This represents a proposed net increase of 3,700 persons over the 1950 population of the neighborhood.

In accordance with the policies of the city-wide land use plan, the higher densities are located on the ridges and at easily accessible points where multi-story dwellings will not obstruct views. Medium density is located adjacent to high medium density, near open spaces, transit, and shopping facilities. This density is also shown where a permissible increase in density is likely to induce needed new investment.

(b) Shopping facilities. An analysis of purchasing power in the Potrero Hill neighborhood indicates that present stores are operating at well below desirable capacity. The existence of a 20 per cent vacancy rate for commercial buildings suggests the marginal character of many of the enterprises. It appears that the purchasing power of the neighborhood when the proposed holding capacity is attained could support some increase in commercial area. A supermarket could probably capture much of the trade now going off the hill and might even stimulate business in other stores. Because it is the more centrally located shopping district, 20th Street probably should be the location of a supermarket. Parking does not appear to be a problem at present, but off-street space would be necessary if a supermarket were built.

Small neighborhood store groups are proposed where one or more stores now exist at 23rd and Wisconsin Streets, 23rd and Kansas Streets, 19th and Vermont Streets and 18th and Kansas Streets.

Total commercial area proposed is 4.25 acres or .28 acres per 1000 persons when population holding capacity is reached. This is somewhat low but takes into account existing commercial area and shopping habits, nearby Mission shopping area, topography and other factors peculiar to Potrero Hill.

## 2. Circulation.

(a) Trafficways. The plan proposes a system of secondary feeder thoroughfares designed to improve access to the neighborhood and circulation within it. These routes should be designated by means of a white centerline and protected by stop signs and parking regulations.

Rhode Island Street from Division Street to Southern Heights Avenue is proposed as the main access street from downtown. This street has 50 foot concrete paving and reaches the summit of the hill with no jogs and an easier grade (17 per cent) than alternate routes. Redesign of the channelization system at 8th and Division Streets would be required. Southern Heights Avenue, 22nd Street and Wisconsin and 25th Streets to Connecticut Street would be the continuation of this route. On the northeastern spur of the hill, Arkansas Street and Missouri Street are recommended as thoroughfares. East-west thoroughfares proposed are 16th Street (part of the city-wide trafficways system), 18th Street from 3rd Street to Missouri Street and portions of 23rd, Kansas and 25th Streets from Potrero Avenue to Pennsylvania Avenue.

All streets in the neighborhood which are now unimproved, with the exception of DeHaro Street between 24th and 25th Streets, are proposed to be planted or vacated, leaving only 10 foot pedestrian right of ways. Designation of parallel or perpendicular parking on many streets would be helpful. Closing 19th Street between Connecticut and Missouri Streets and leaving only access to garages on 19th Street between Missouri and Texas Streets would reduce intersections, provide expansion space for Daniel Webster School and a public square usable by two churches.

It is recommended that if the Southern Crossing approach by the Army Street freeway is to be built it should follow the approximate route of 26th Street instead of the more northerly route shown on preliminary engineering drawings. The 26th Street location would mark the boundary between living and working areas, rather than isolating a small group of residences south of the freeway.

(b) Transit. Rerouting the No. 53 bus to Rhode Island Street, Southern Heights Avenue, Wisconsin Street, 25th Street, Dakota Street to Missouri Street would serve more people in the center of the neighborhood, faster and more directly. It is recommended that this line continue to Market Street. Alternate buses would run in opposite directions on the loop. No change is proposed in the route of the

No. 22 trolley bus. The No. 35 bus would run on 23rd, Kansas, 25th, Connecticut, and Army Streets, providing a transfer point with the No. 53 line at 25th Street.

### 3. Public Facilities.

(a) Schools. The three present elementary schools, Patrick Henry, Daniel Webster, and the new Starr King School, are well located to serve the neighborhood. Each lacks adequate playground space and should be expanded to include the entire block (1.84 acres) in which it is located.

Present elementary enrollment figures indicate that within six years the junior high school population on Potrero Hill will reach 1000, the number necessary to justify construction of a school. There are now approximately 1200 students in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades of the four elementary schools.

It is recommended that a new junior high school be located adjacent to the Potrero Playfield, in order that advantage be taken of its excellent facilities, which probably could not be duplicated. The site proposed is the block bounded by Wisconsin, 22nd, Arkansas and 23rd Streets (3.75 acres). Although only 19 per cent of this site is vacant, the 1950 census showed that 45 per cent of the 74 dwelling units had no running water or were dilapidated.

Mission High School no doubt will continue to serve the neighborhood.

(b) Parks. The neighborhood development plan includes the recommendations of the report, Parks and Recreation Areas in San Francisco, published by the Department of City Planning in April, 1954.

One additional playlot is proposed. Potrero Hill Playfield and Jackson Playfield provide the major recreation facilities for the neighborhood. It is recommended that McKinley Square Park be expanded northward, on vacant land adjacent and developed as a playground as well as an ornamental park (see demonstration project plan). A playground should be developed in the middle of the block between Arkansas and Connecticut Streets and 19th and 20th Streets on city owned land. Two quarter-acre playlots are proposed at 20th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue and 25th and DeHaro Streets. A small ornamental park is recommended in the high density area

adjacent to the new Starr King School.

#### 4. Neighborhood Appearance.

The general appearance of a neighborhood is important to preserving individual property values, and in holding and attracting good families. Residents in an area sometimes are not fully conscious of the quality of appearance of their neighborhood, as revealed by the interviews conducted by the Coro Foundation interns. To an outsider, a neighborhood is either visually attractive or it is not.

Discussion of the visual character of the Potrero Hill Neighborhood may be divided into two parts: (1) Potrero Hill as seen from other parts of the city, and (2) the neighborhood as seen from within.

From elsewhere in San Francisco and from the Bay Bridge, Potrero Hill appears to be a gently rising hill covered with an even texture of houses, rather than the steep hill it is. The most obvious visual elements are the P. G. & E. gas holder (390 feet high), the water tower on top of the hill, the band of trees around Potrero Playfield on the east, and the bare freeway cut on its western side. Multi-story buildings, in the high medium density area proposed by the plan, would give definition to the hill as a point of interest on the city skyline. Tall trees on the crest and west slope could be as important here as they are on Telegraph Hill, creating an accent in a panorama dominated by geometric forms.

One of the most important ways in which the hill is seen is by the motorist traveling at high speeds on the Bayshore Freeway. From a fast moving vehicle the small houses become a texture or pattern and the downtown skyline is more worthy of attention. Here the need for planting is particularly evident, both as a contrasting frame for the view and as relief for a motorist who has not seen trees since crossing the city line. Tree planting here would also deaden the noise of traffic on the freeway.

From within the neighborhood one of the principal local assets is, of course, the view. Much of the Potrero area is drab and uninteresting. Streets are for the most part excessively wide. There is usually little or no planting

in front of the houses. Steep streets bring the pavement more into view, often giving a feeling of overpowering expanse of concrete and asphalt. The large number of vacant lots and many unimproved streets are not only rubbish collecting eyesores, but give many places an unpleasant, unfinished appearance.



Although most blocks have houses of varying size, design, condition, and set-back, the overall urban texture, however, is quite uniform. Parks, schools, and the public housing projects provide some contrast for relief. The proposed addition of high medium density development along the ridge would vary this texture. White and pastel shades, often well weathered, are the predominant building colors. Use of carefully selected bolder colors would do much to reduce drabness. Street tree planting would bring wide streets more in scale with the buildings facing them, especially when used in conjunction with parking bays as proposed for Rhode Island Street in the demonstration project area.

On the northeast slope the regular street pattern and unvaried house fronts become monotonous. Closing two blocks of 19th Street, and construction of a square in front of the Catholic and Presbyterian churches would create a needed focal point.



The area between 20th and 22nd Streets and the Bayshore Freeway and Rhode Island Street (both frontages) was studied as a possible demonstration project area (See Plate 4). Included are two and one-half blocks (approximately 9.5 acres of which 7.8 acres is in residential use) plus McKinley Square (2.37 acres). This area is believed to be of about the maximum size in which an intensive improvement program could be carried on, house to house without spreading improvement efforts so thin as to provide a result not immediately noticeable.

1. Reasons for Selection. As a demonstration project area, the site selected has the following advantages:

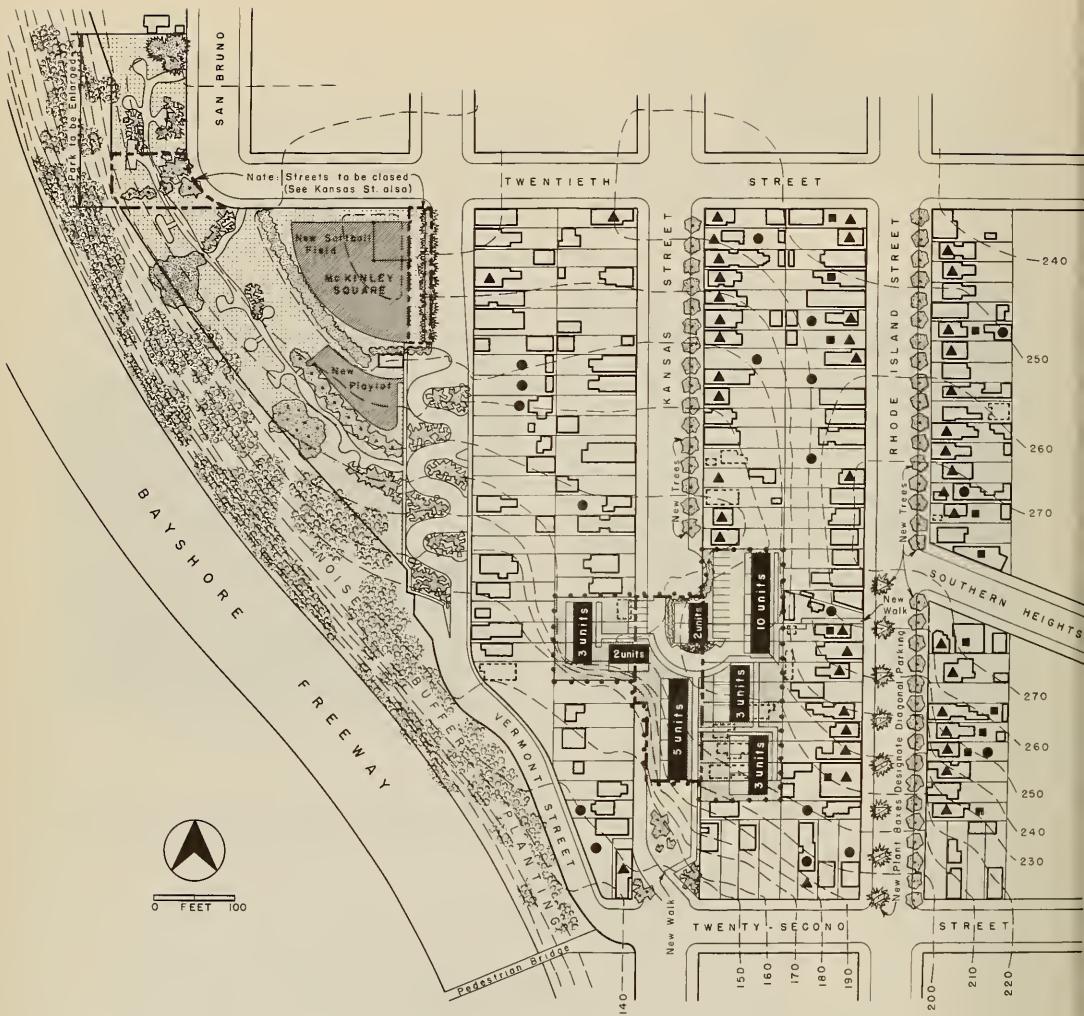
1. Prominent location -- near neighborhood center and visible from the freeway.
2. Fine views.
3. Opportunity to use a variety of improvement techniques.
4. Census data shows incidence of substandard housing is among the highest on the hill.
5. Area is 20 per cent vacant.

2. Land Use. Land in the demonstration project area is used as follows:

78	one-family residences
36	two-family structures
2	four-family structures
1	six-family structure
1	grocery store
2	churches (Russian Baptist, Russian Full Gospel)
2	vacant stores (grocery, bakery)
25	vacant lots
	McKinley Square Park

The typical lot size in the area is 25 feet x 100 feet.

Approximately 400 feet of Kansas Street north of 22nd Street is unimproved and impassable for vehicles. Although a straight connection of 22nd Street with the end of the present pavement on Kansas Street would result in a grade of only 15 per cent, it would require a deep cut through rock, a retaining wall on the west edge, and would make use of presently vacant frontage difficult.



## POTRERO HILL URBAN RENEWAL STUDY

# DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

### PRIVATE ACTION

- ▲ PAINTING NEEDED
- BUILDING REPAIRS NEEDED
- YARD CLEANING REQUIRED
- MAJOR REPAIRS OR REMOVAL INDICATED
- ..... LAND ASSEMBLY AREA

### PUBLIC ACTION

- ▲ NEW PLANTING
- NEW PARK IMPROVEMENTS
- ▨ NEW PLAYGROUNDS
- STREETS CLOSED

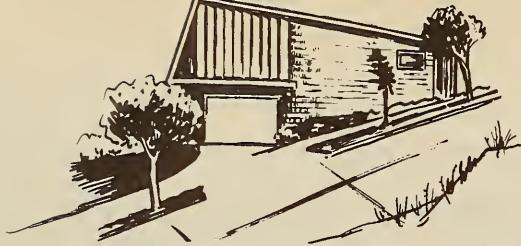
McKinley Square Park is only partially developed and is inadequately maintained. The public rest rooms need rehabilitation. There are no street trees.

3. Housing and Population Characteristics. The project area contains 87 structures built before 1919, 23 built between 1919 and 1948, and 3 built since 1948. According to the 1950 Census of Housing, 28 per cent of the dwelling units were dilapidated or lacked running water. Forty-five per cent of the dwelling units were owner occupied, a lower average than on some other parts of the hill.

Judged by their appearance from the street there are seven residential structures which need major repairs or should be demolished. Seven accessory buildings which should be razed have been noted. Inspection of rear yards probably would triple this number. In addition 60 properties appear to have one or more of the following defects:

Paint badly worn	45
Fence repair or removal needed	12
Garage door repair needed	12
Repair or removal of trim, porches, clothes poles, aerials, etc. needed	6
Glass replacement needed (except garage doors)	2
Yard needs cleaning or planting; garbage can in front, etc.	8

No separate census data on population characteristics is available for this small area, but it is believed that there are no significant differences from tract L-1 as a whole. If the 165 dwelling units are occupied by an average of 3.34 persons each, then the population of the area is about 550. Telephone listings show 23 per cent Russian and Eastern European surnames, 7 per cent Italian surnames, and 3 per cent Spanish surnames.



## SUGGESTED PLAN FOR DEMONSTRATION PROJECT AREA

A plan has been prepared showing those physical improvements which could be expected to be made in a relatively short time by a vigorous program of public and private action. This plan is based on the long-range neighborhood development plan and suggests specific projects for public agencies and private persons.

The major features of the plan are:

### 1. Public Action

(a) Expansion of McKinley Park by vacating 20th Street west of San Bruno Avenue and acquisition from the State of vacant land north of 20th Street on San Bruno Avenue. These steps are now in progress.

(b) Enlargement of the level area of the park by vacating unused sidewalk and part of the roadway of Vermont Street between 20th Street and the serpentine.

(c) Development of a softball field and playlot; rehabilitation of rest rooms; planting of serpentine; landscaping of lower slopes of park with viewpoints and benches.

(d) Planting of trees and ground cover on freeway cuts as noise buffer.

(e) Street tree planting on Kansas and Rhode Island Streets, construction of islands to designate diagonal parking on the west side of Rhode Island Street between Southern Heights Avenue and 22nd Street.

(f) Vacation of about 15,000 square feet of Kansas Street and construction of a pedestrian walk on a 10-foot right of way.

(g) Inspection and enforcement where necessary to gain compliance with minimum health and safety laws.

2. Private Action

- (a) Modernization, repair and improvement of individual properties.
- (b) Provision of legal, financial and architectural advice to home owners.
- (c) Construction of garden apartments on approximately 56,000 square feet of land now used as follows:

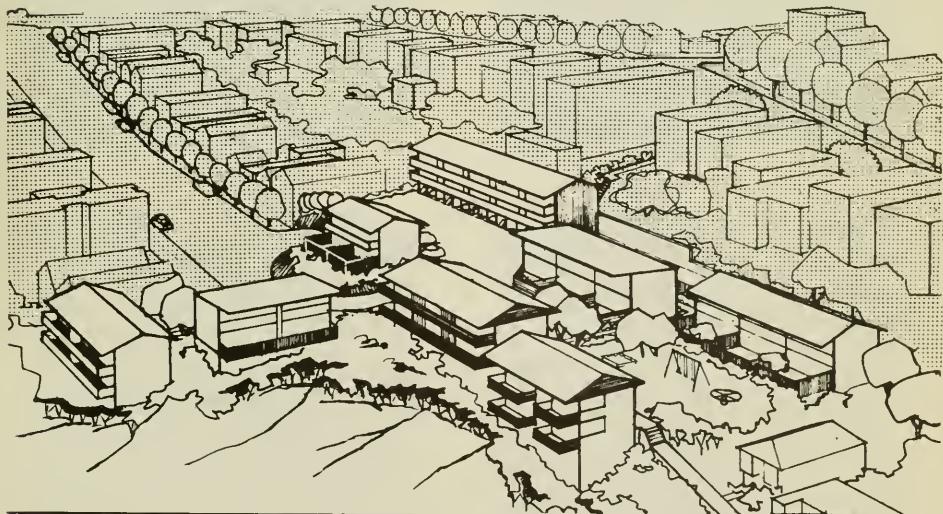
10 vacant lots now inaccessible from improved street.

5 lots now inaccessible from paved street with structures which appear to be substandard.

15,000 square feet of Kansas Street to be vacated.

A suggested plan shows eighteen 1200 square feet 2-story row house units with private yards or balconies and ten 600 square feet units. Garages are planned for 10 cars and open off-street parking for 20 cars. All units would have a panoramic view of the Mission Valley. A playlot, drying yard, and generous landscaping would be included. Buildings would cover 25 per cent of the land.

- (d) Construction of residences on the 11 other vacant lots in the area.



SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENT OF KANSAS STREET.  
Between 20th and 22nd Streets

GOOD HOMES ON POTRERO HILL



## HOUSING AND POPULATION DATA ON POTRERO HILL

The study area is bounded by 16th and Army Streets and Potrero Avenue and Third Street. This area contains 170 blocks, 117 of which are in Census Tract L-1 which includes the area between 17th Street, 25th Street and Vermont Street and the Bay. This tract contains most of the residential parts of the study area. Census tract data may therefore be used to give a reasonably accurate picture of conditions in the study area. The following data is from the 1950 Census--Census Tract L-1:

Total population	11,451
Male	50.3%
Female	49.7%
Native white	73.0%
Foreign-born white	20.9%
Negro	4.9%
Other non-white	1.2%
Nativity, foreign-born white	
Great Britain and Northern Ireland	3.4%
Ireland (Eire)	3.5%
Denmark, Norway and Sweden	2.1%
France	.8%
Germany and Austria	5.9%
Italy	28.9%
U.S.S.R.	18.1%
Canada	2.4%
Mexico	9.0%
Other America	5.5%
All other	20.4%
Age	
Under 15 years	28.2%
15 to 19	6.2%
20 to 39	34.0%
40 to 64	26.0%
65 and over	6.6%
Marital status, persons 14 or over	
Single	22.5%
Married	64.9%
Widowed or divorced	12.6%
Education, persons 25 or older	
8 years or less schooling	50.7%
1 to 3 years high school	18.3%
4 years high school	20.5%
1 to 3 years college	4.7%
4 years college or more	3.4%
Residence in 1949, persons 1 year and older, 1950	
Same house as in 1950	83.5%
Different house, same county	11.7%
Different county or abroad	4.8%

Income in 1949, families and unrelated individuals	
Less than \$1000	15.2%
\$1000 to 1999	11.1%
2000 to 2999	19.2%
3000 to 3999	22.4%
4000 to 4999	12.4%
5000 to 5999	7.3%
6000 to 6999	4.4%
7000 to 9999	4.1%
10,000 and over	.9%
Median income	\$3,119
Unrelated individuals, total population	6.5%
Average population per household	3.34
Total number of dwelling units	3,469
Owner occupied	38.8%
Renter occupied	57.5%
Vacant	3.7%
Type of structure	
1 dwelling unit detached	28.8%
1 dwelling unit attached	7.2%
1 and 2 dwelling units semi-attached	4.2%
2 dwelling units other	28.1%
3 and 4 dwelling units	12.7%
5 or more dwelling units	19.0%
Condition and age of dwelling units	
Without private bath or dilapidated	10.7%
Built 1919 or earlier	59.4%
Contract rent, renter occupied and vacant for rent dwelling units	
Less than \$20	9.0%
\$20 to 29	26.9%
30 to 39	33.4%
40 to 49	21.3%
50 to 74	7.4%
75 to 99	1.5%
100 and over	.4%
Median rent	\$33.73
Value of single family structures, owner occupied and vacant for sale	
Less than \$5000	17.6%
\$5000 to 7499	34.2%
7500 to 9999	25.6%
10,000 to 14,999	20.6%
15,000 and over	2.0%
Median value	\$7,319



#### EXHIBIT MATERIAL ON THE POTRERO HILL STUDY AREA

This material is on file at the San Francisco Department of City Planning. Numbers 1 through 9 are original maps in color. For Numbers 1 through 7 the scale is one inch to 200 feet, and for Numbers 8 and 9, one inch to 50 feet.

1. Existing Land Use.
2. Age of Structures. Erected before 1919, erected 1919-1948, erected after 1948.
3. Condition of Housing. Percentage of dwellings in block with no running water or dilapidated.
4. Appearance of Structures. Rehabilitation indicated, demolition indicated, demolition required (war housing), stable.
5. Owner Occupancy. Percentage of dwelling units in block occupied by owner.
6. Topography and Street Grade. Paved street grades, unpaved streets, impassable streets.
7. Neighborhood Development Plan. Land use, circulation, density, public facilities - existing and proposed.
8. Suggested Plan for Demonstration Project - Public Action. Shows street improvement and vacations, park development, street tree planting.
9. Suggested Plan for Demonstration Project - Private Action. Shows where exterior improvements to private properties are needed, suggested development of vacant land.
10. Photographs - aerial. General views and close-up pictures.
11. Perspective sketches of proposed development.
12. "A Study of Potrero Hill Neighborhood Attitudes and Organization in Relation to Urban Renewal," prepared for the San Francisco Department of City Planning by Dianne Catlin and Benjamin S. Neufeld, interns in public affairs of the Coro Foundation, December 1954. Interviews with some 50 neighborhood leaders. File copies only are available.

## CITIZENS PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE FOR URBAN RENEWAL

The committee was appointed by Mayor Elmer E. Robinson on December 14, 1954. The committee's purpose is to promote interest in urban renewal in San Francisco and to provide citizen leadership and guidance.

Supervisor James Leo Halley, Honorary Chairman  
Lloyd D. Hanford, Chairman  
Henry R. Ehlers, Vice-Chairman  
Mrs. Edward Matzger, Secretary

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Dr. L. R. Ludwigsen  
Ralph McGill  
Dr. Frank McKeitt  
Frank E. Oman  
Wendell Spackman  
Dr. William McKinley Thomas  
Arthur V. Toupin  
Emil J. Weber  
Kirk Whitehead

### Ex officio:

Thomas A. Brooks, Chief Administrative Officer  
Morley Goldberg, Deputy City Attorney  
Sherman P. Duckel, Director of Public Works  
Chief Frank P. Kelly, Fire Department  
Paul Oppermann, Director of Planning  
Eugene J. Riordan, Director, Redevelopment Agency  
Dr. Ellis D. Sox, Director of Public Health

*city*







